

MICHIGAN CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

N E W S L E T T E R

MDCR Opens Branch Office In Benton Harbor

After touring the city of Benton Harbor in March 2004, Director Parker promised to open a Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) branch office as part of a renewed commitment to Benton Harbor. On Tuesday, December 14, 2004, Director Parker made good on that promise and hosted an open house with community leaders to announce the new MDCR branch office in Benton Harbor.

"The citizens of Benton Harbor need to know that progress in their community is very important to the progress of our state," said Director Parker. "Our re-opening of an office in the city is just one example of our commitment to seeing them through some very difficult times."

Community and government leaders that attended the event included Rose Hunt-Redd, Director of Citizens for Progressive Change; Benton Harbor Mayor Wilce Cook; Sergeant Bennie Bowers, Michigan State Police; 21st District Senator Ron Jelinek; Representative John Proos; Gregory Roberts, Director of Community and Faith Based Initiatives, Office of the

Governor; and Reverend Kenneth Gavin.

MDCR attendees included Director Parker; Director of Civil Rights Operations Warren Bonam; Rights Representative Lance Bettison, Kalamazoo/Benton Harbor Office; Kalamazoo Office Team Coordinator Renee Kenyon; Tonia Williams, Grand Rapids Rights Representative; Harold Core, Public Information Officer; Karmin Dixon, Benton Harbor Student Assistant; Gloria Gonzales, Executive Assistant to Director Parker; Hector Shamley, Civil Rights Operations Manager-Detroit; and Trevor Coleman, Director of Communications.



From left to right: PRP-Kalamazoo/Benton Harbor Lance Bettison, PRP-Grand Rapids Tonia Williams, and Benton Harbor Student Assistant Karmin Dixon.

The Benton Harbor MDCR office is located in the Michigan Works building at 499 W. Main Street. The office is open 9:00a.m.- 4:00p.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays, and is staffed by Benton Harbor native Rights Representative Lance Bettison and Student Assistant Karmin Dixon. Call 269-925-7044 for more information.



December 14, 2004, Benton Harbor open house: Director Linda V. Parker communicated a renewed commitment to the Benton Harbor community.

IN THIS ISSUE

Detroit Teen Conference.....	2
Notable Settlements	2
DRC Study	3
New MCRC Appointees.....	4
Director's Corner	5
Comm. & Dept. News	6
1st Arab & Chaldean Meeting	7



21st Annual Metro Detroit Teen Conference

The 21st Annual Metro Detroit Teen Conference of the Merrill-Palmer Institute was held on November 4, 2004, on the campus of Wayne State University in Detroit. The conference hosted around 300 ninth and tenth graders from more than 50 schools and organizations in metro Detroit.

The purpose of the conference is to bring metro Detroit teenagers together from diverse backgrounds to spend the day discovering what they have in common. The diversity is not limited to race and ethnicity, but also includes economic background, inner-city, suburban and those from public and private schools. The students were seated in tables of eight people for topical discussions facilitated by trained adults.

MDCR is a long-time partner with this conference because of the shared belief in the importance of teaching young people to embrace and understand diversity. This year, MDCR was especially active in the conference. MDCR Partnership Team member John Golaszewski served as chair of the conference, while MDCR colleagues Donna Harahuc and Linda McLin served as conference co-chairs. Donna and Linda received Spirit of Detroit awards from the Detroit City

Council and plaques from the Merrill-Palmer Institute for their outstanding service to the community. In addition, the following MDCR colleagues served as facilitators: Nikki Pardo, Kenya Hunter, Precious Boone, Bobbie Curtis, Charles Schoder, Jeff Weiss, Amy McDonald, Trisha Cross, Barrett Morris, and Sonya Morgan.



From left to right: Co-Chairs Donna Harahuc, OWL Team and PRP-Detroit Linda McLin pose with their Metro-Detroit Conference awards for distinguished service.

Running concurrently with the conference was a Counselors Workshop for the educators who transported the students to Wayne State University for the conference. This year the workshop presenters were MDCR colleagues Linda McLin, Marlene Cain, and Virgil Petty.



From left to right: Rosi Triano, Metro Teen Conference Steering Committee member; MDCR Partnership Team member and Conference Chair John Golaszewski; Detroit City Council President Maryann Mahaffey; Betty Roberts, Metro Teen Conference Steering Committee member; and MDCR Director Parker.

Notable Settlements

The following are some of the major settlements from November 2004 through January 2005.

- Claimant alleged she was sexually harassed by a member of management. This matter was resolved for a settlement of \$14,480, including a combination of cash and yearly salary.
- A Black man alleged he was subjected to unequal terms and conditions of employment, and suspended for complaining regarding unequal treatment based on race and sex. This matter was resolved for a settlement of \$24,893, including a combination of cash and yearly salary.
- Claimant alleged he was discharged because of his age and a perceived disability. This matter was resolved when the Claimant was returned to work with a yearly salary of \$20,800.
- Claimant alleged he was discharged because of the perception of a disability. The matter was resolved when Claimant was returned to work at a yearly salary of \$26,620.
- Claimant, a Latino American, alleged racial harassment and unequal terms and conditions of employment based on race. This complaint was resolved with a settlement agreement worth a yearly salary of \$60,804.
- A pregnant woman alleged she was subjected to reduced pay and other unfair terms and conditions of employment because of her pregnancy. This matter was resolved with a monetary settlement agreement of \$20,000.

Study Reveals Ethnic Names On Applications Less Likely To Get Called

A report by the Discrimination Research Center (DRC) of California found that Arab American/South Asian job applicants received significantly fewer responses from temporary employment agencies throughout California than comparably qualified individuals of any other race or ethnicity.

From August to November 2003, DRC sent approximately 6200 resumes to temporary employment agencies throughout California. The 20 different resume types were distributed equally among male and female job applicants with identifiable Arab American/South Asian, Latino, African American, Asian American or White names. Resumes listed comparable education, experience and computer skills for administrative and office jobs.

Only 24% of Arab American/South Asian men and 29% of Arab American/South Asian women received responses, far lower than the 35% response rate for White and Latina women who surpassed all other gender and ethnic groups.

In five of seven California regions, Arab Americans/South Asians had the lowest response rate from temporary employment agencies. Among all ethnic groups, Arab American/South Asian men and women fared the worst in the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Central Valley, and Bakersfield regions. This report strongly suggests that Arab American and South Asian individuals throughout California must be wary not only of hate violence in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, and recent events in Iraq and the Middle East; they must also be cognizant of less obvious acts of discrimination in employment practices.

In the Silicon Valley and San Diego regions, African Americans had the lowest response rate of any ethnic group. In the San Francisco Bay Area and Central Valley regions, they had the highest response rate. Overall, the response rate for African Americans mirrored the statewide average for all groups (31%). However, previous DRC studies of temporary employment agency preferences for White job applicants over equally or more qualified African Americans remind us that discrimination persists and is subtle.

Previous studies document African Americans being screened out at later stages of the employment process. This report also found that temporary employment agencies respond less often to White male applicants (29%). Agencies may find White male applicants "too good" for office support or administrative positions and be reluctant to invest in an applicant who might leave quickly for a more "suitable" job.

Finally, Asian American men and women received fewer responses than the statewide average, often lagging behind all other race or ethnic groups. Were it not for the separate research sampling of Arab/South Asian names, Asian Americans would have received the fewest responses. This finding suggests that, like Arab Americans, Asian Americans face persistent discrimination that serves as a barrier to fair consideration for employment. Moreover, experts on Asian American employment issues concur that temporary employment agencies may believe that they can ignore resumes submitted by Asian Americans without fear of a complaint or a civil rights investigation, which they might more likely receive if they ignored a member of another ethnic group.

This is the third report in the DRC series on the temporary employment industry. DRC's previous two studies found that White applicants were preferred for hire over equally or more qualified African American applicants. This report examines the hiring process at an earlier stage and encompasses more of California's diverse demographic communities.



The Discrimination Research Center is a non-profit civil rights organization that utilizes research to measure the extent to which unlawful barriers to equal employment or access to public services exist. For more reports by the DRC or for more information about the organization or its parent organization, The Impact Fund, visit <http://www.drcenter.org>.

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Governor Appoints Wesaw and Scott to MCRC

In September 2004, Governor Granholm made the following appointments to the Michigan Civil Rights Commission:



Commissioner Kelvin W. Scott

Commissioner Kelvin W. Scott: Kelvin W. Scott is currently Vice President, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary for Plastech Engineered Products, Inc., a tier one and tier two supplier to the automotive industry. He formerly worked as Associate Corporate Counsel for Masco Corporation, a litigator with the firm of Kienbaum Opperwall Hardy and Pelton, an Assistant United States Attorney with the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Eastern District of Michigan and an associate attorney and partner with the law firm of Dickinson Wright. Mr. Scott received a Juris Doctorate degree from Georgetown University Law Center in 1987 and a B.A. from Michigan State University in 1984.

Mr. Scott's law practice has covered many aspects of civil and criminal litigation. In addition to his current general corporate

practice, he has also handled employment litigation under the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act, commercial litigation, product liability litigation and both the prosecution and defense of criminal cases. While at the U.S. Attorneys Office, Mr. Scott litigated many federal jury trials, including drug offenses, gun cases and fraud prosecutions. He also argued several criminal cases before the sixth circuit court of appeals.

Mr. Scott is a past president of the Wolverine Bar Association, one of the largest organizations of African American attorneys in the country. Mr. Scott is the former Chairman of the Board of the Eastside Emergency Center, a homeless shelter and transitional housing development for single mothers in Detroit. He served on the Board of Directors for the Barristers of the Detroit Metropolitan Bar Association and received its Distinguished Service Award. He is a past president and former state representative of the Detroit chapter of the National Black Prosecutors Association. He is also a former executive board member for the 15th Democratic Congressional District (now the 13th district).

Commissioner Matthew Wesaw: In 2001, Matthew Wesaw retired after serving as a Michigan State Police Officer for 26 years. During his career with the Michigan State Police, Mr. Wesaw served at the Jackson, Flat Rock, and Lansing posts before being promoted to Uniform Sergeant in 1986. He was later transferred to the Criminal Investigation Division, where he became Detective Sergeant and served in the Organized Crime and Auto Theft Units. In 1995, he was elected to the full-time position of Vice President of the Michigan State Police Troopers Association (MSPTA). He served as the



Commissioner Matthew J. Wesaw

Vice President of the MSPTA until his retirement in January of 2001. Mr. Wesaw now serves as the Director of Government Relations for the Michigan State Police Troopers Association.

In addition to his responsibilities with the MSPTA, Mr. Wesaw is a current tribal council member and past chairman of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians. Mr. Wesaw has been involved in many Native American organizations, including being a past board member to the Lansing North American Indian Center, past chairman of the Commission on Indian Affairs under previous Governor John Engler, and current member of the Nokomis Learning Center. Mr. Wesaw is also a former appointee to the Michigan Community Service Commission.

Matthew Wesaw attended Great Lakes Christian College and has a degree in Criminal Justice from Lansing Community College. He lives in Holt with his wife, Gloria and their daughters, Carly & Kelsey.

Director's Corner



Linda V. Parker, J.D.

In January, our nation celebrated the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. All across the land people of all races, religions, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds were asked to stop for a moment and reflect on the memory and legacy of the man once called a “metaphysical physician,” for his transcendental belief in the ultimate goodness of all mankind - and his unshakeable belief that we may one day see it in ourselves.

His message of non-violence, social and racial justice and equality is now widely accepted within our society, as many people who once took issue with King have come around to see the righteousness of his cause.

That is progress for which we all can be thankful.

Yet, over the past two decades there has emerged a deeply troubling phenomenon of people claiming to embrace the spirit of Dr. King, while consciously twisting his words and message to actually undermine everything for which he stood, fought and died.

One of the most shameful and appalling symbols of this trend is the suggestion that affirmative action policies somehow violate Dr. King’s vision of a “color-blind society.”

Nonsense. Dr. King may have spoken of having a “dream,” but he was a realist when it came to understanding the state of race relations in America and what it would take to bring about equality. And that is why he was such a strong advocate for affirmative action.

Through his writings, speeches and interviews it is clear that he understood – as others truly committed to equality and civil rights do – that affirmative action policies are a critical component of the civil rights movement.

For example, in his book *Why We Can't Wait* published in 1963 shortly before the March on Washington, he directly addressed the issue of so-called preferential treatment:

“Whenever this issue of compensatory or preferential treatment for the Negro

is raised, some of our friends recoil in horror. The Negro should be granted equality, they agree, but he should ask for nothing more. On the surface, this appears reasonable, but it is not realistic. For it is obvious that if a man enters the starting line of a race three hundred years after another man, the first would have to perform some incredible feat in order to catch up.”

Dr. King sacrificed his life and thousands of others involved in the civil rights struggle sacrificed jobs, financial security – and some even their lives – to make the government understand the importance of passing legislation and crafting policies that would help address discrimination against black Americans while also preparing our society to deal with a more racially diverse future.

It is a tragic measure of the state of race relations in America today that the very people who have completely separated themselves from the egalitarian dimensions of Dr. King’s legacy can deceptively – but successfully – link their views to his in order to undermine it.

Linda V. Parker is an attorney and director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights.

Commission and Department News

Civil Rights Commission Hosts Public Forum in Dearborn



The Michigan Civil Rights Commission hosted a public forum on Monday, November 22, 2004, in the Council Chambers of Dearborn City Hall. Residents and local faith-based and governmental leaders were given the opportunity to voice their civil rights concerns to the Commission regarding the Dearborn area.

The Commission heard testimony from representatives of several Arab American student and community organizations such as the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) and the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), as well as Triangle Foundation and the

American Civil Liberties Union. Other highlights included former Commission Chair Gary Torgow receiving a plaque in honor of his commitment and public service with the Commission and the introduction of several members of the newly formed Advisory Council on Arab and Chaldean American Affairs.



From left to right: Commissioner Albert Calille, Commission Secretary Mohammed Abdrabbob, Commission Vice Chair Mark Bernstein, Director Linda V. Parker, former Commissioner Gary Torgow, Commission Chair Valerie Simmons, Commissioner Kelvin Scott, Commission Treasurer Margaret Van Houten.

Advisory Council On Arab and Chaldean American Affairs Holds 1st Meeting

On January 19, 2005, the Advisory Council on Arab and Chaldean American Affairs held its first meeting at the beautiful Southfield Public Library. The meeting provided a first opportunity for members of the Council to meet and discuss the

organization's priorities and operations, as well as become acquainted with the leadership of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights.

Chaired by U.S. District Court Judge George C. Steeh, the Council was created

by Governor Jennifer M. Granholm in September 2004 by Executive Order No.2004-33. The Council acts in an advisory capacity to the Governor of MDCR on matters pertaining to all aspects of Arab and Chaldean life in Michigan.



January 19, 2005, first meeting of Advisory Council on Arab and Chaldean American Affairs. Standing, from left to right: Oussama Siblani, Founder and Publisher, Arab American News; Fay Beydoun, executive director of the Arab American Institute of Michigan; Samir A. Danou, president and owner of Danou Enterprises Inc.; William H. Salaita, director of the Arab American and Chaldean Council; Karen L. Karam, broker at Karen Karam Broker; Dennis P. Denno, chief of staff for State Senator Buzz Thomas; George C. Steeh, U.S. District Court Judge and president of the Arab-American Bar Association of Michigan; Samir W. Mashni, president of Samir W. Mashni & Associates, P.C.; Imad S. Hamad, regional director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee; Terry T. Ahwal, director of development at Madonna University; Rana A. Abbas, public affairs director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee; Charlene M. Elder, magistrate of the 19th District Court, City of Dearborn; John M. Mackay, H & R Block; Nida Samona, chair of the Liquor Control Commission; Leila Saba-Hanna, MDCR Arab American Affairs Liaison. Seated, from left to right: Ismael Ahmed, executive director of the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services; Linda V. Parker, Director MDCR; Dr. Fatina Masri, physician at the Masri Clinic; Alexander H. Isaac, executive director of the American Arab Heritage Council; Abdulhakem A. Alsadah, manager of the Arab American and Chaldean Council Yemeni Outreach Center and Honor Council General of Yemen in Michigan; Hany G. Choulagh, senior assistant electrical engineer for the City of Detroit and first vice chairman of Chaldean Federation of America.

Also attending the meeting but not pictured here are: Karen L. Henry, executive director of Grand Rapids Operation Weed and Seed, Department of Justice Initiative; Martin F. Manna, managing partner at Interlink Media and executive director for the Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce; and Basel K. Shatara, owner/corporation president of The Pita House. Members of the Council not attending the meeting were: Mokbel K. Chedid, chief of neurosurgery at Oakwood Neuro Surgery Associates; Ahmad Chebbani, president of Omnex Accounting and Tax Services and co-founder of the American Arab Chamber of Commerce; Haifa Fakhouri, Ph.D., president/CEO of the Arab American and Chaldean Council; Hesham E. Gayar, chairman of the Department of Radiation Oncology at McLaren Regional Medical Center and American Arab Heritage Council Member; Abed E. Hammoud, principle attorney at the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office; Radwan Mardini, chaplain at the American Muslim Center; Samuel A. Nouhan, chief of litigation for Wayne County Corp Counsel; and George H. Shalhoub, pastor at The Basilica of St. Mary Orthodox Church.

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